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S E R M O N,

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Before the SOCIETY in *Paisley*, for  
REFORMATION of MANNERS.

By JAMES BAINES, A. M.

Minister of the Gospel in *Paisley*.

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## S E R M O N, &amp;c.

JEREMIAH VII. 9, 10.

*Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not ; And come and stand before me in this house which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations ?*

**T**O complain of the evil of the times, and inveigh against their corruptions

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in general, may be the language of real concern, but can have no great tendency to reform a dissolute immoral age, the more likely way to succeed in this, is to condescend, to point out particularly the vices which prevail, the deformity, desert and danger of them ; this is bringing home the charge to the sinner's conscience, as Nathan to David, *Thou art the man* ; in this manner were the Prophets and Apostles directed to execute their commission, many instances of this kind might be quoted if necessary, our text is sufficient and full to the purpose: *Will ye steal, murder, commit adultery, and swear falsely, &c.* happy would our land and town be, if none of these  
 sins



sins were named or practised among us, as becometh saints ; but alas ! there are of these abominations in the midst of us, and therefore I think myself authorized, and hope it may not be unsuitable to this occasion, to expostulate a little in the words, and after the prophets example, and as it seems to be the most natural method, I propose,

I. To illustrate the several particulars in the text, - of which this professing people, are accused.

II. Conclude with some reflections upon the whole. We begin then with opening up the particular vices charged on this people,

ple, for which the Prophet, or rather God by the Prophet does so pungently expostulate with them. And,

1. *Will ye steal?* Have you not known, have you not heard of the eight command, and what the one supreme Law-giver says in it? Did you never read of the *flying roll* which the Prophet speaks of? Zech. v. 3, 4. *The curse of God*, not to make the thief a transient visit, but to *remain in the midst of his house, till it consume the stones thereof, and timber thereof*; yes, some will say, we have read of it, but for our part we never did put forth our hand, to take away, or hurt the property of others; perhaps

perhaps you think so at present, but did you never connive at the commission of this sin, or paliate, and screen the offender? Have you not taken advantage of another's ignorance or necessity to defraud him? Has not superior power been set on work, and employed by you to oppress, or the law been used as an engine to wrest from others, what was their right, and you had no good title to? If guilty in any of these instances, you are chargeable with theft, if you have wrested away the rights of the church and kingdom of Christ, (and she has rights natural and unalienable) it is sacrilege, and no place nor power, no pretence of law, or success in a law-suit will protect against

gainst the assault of the *flying roll*.

2. *Will ye murder?* This is every where confessed to be a crime of the deepest dye, which not only stains the conscience, but the land where it is committed, until it is washed off by the blood of the murderer; and though you never took away life unjustly, have you not indulged that anger, hatred, and revenge, that intemperance and sensuality, or provoked others to these lusts, which are the usual source of this bloody crime? Possibly you have not maimed or hurt the bodies of any, but have not precious souls been much wronged, or alas! destroyed by you? Destroyed by your bad counsels,



fels, or worse example, by enticing them to sin, and hardning them in it; and if the blood of the body wickedly shed is said to cry, must not the cry of undone immortal souls surpass it, as much as the loudest peal of thunder exceeds a human voice, doubtless it must, which will shake the murderer's heart with terror, as Sinai shook, and make his ears to tingle.

3. *Will ye commit adultery?* This is not so much one, as a complication of many of the foulest crimes, it is a trampling under foot authority divine, and most express, it is an horrid composition of lust, injustice and perjury, for it breaks through the

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most solemn vows, it kills that confidence and trust which is the foundation of family quiet, and domestick happiness, and kindles jealousy of all the passions the most tormenting, it exposes the much injured husband or wife to the raillery of an unkind wicked world, and intails infamy, poverty, miseries manifold upon the innocent, and spurrious offspring of such wretches, in a word it is a trespass for which reparation can scarcely be made, or will be regarded, therefore when by the Jewish law, the thief upon restoring fourfold was let go, the adulterer when convicted, must die the death; and for what a low brutal gratification, are fortune, fame, body, soul, domestick

messick peace, the honour of posterity, and immortal interests sacrificed? Immortal interests, I say, for if God judge such, as we are told he will, can they escape the damnation of hell?

4. *Will ye swear, and swear falsely?* Do you not fear to abuse his name in your ordinary discourse, by customary oaths and cursing? That name which is great and dreadful and holy, has he not peremptorily forbid this in the third commandment, and declared *that he will not hold them guiltless?* Nay, has he not threatned, that for such irreverence, *He will make their plagues wonderful?* Deut. xxviii. 58. Have you considered well  
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what damnation is, when in wantonness or wrath you can call on God, to inflict it upon yourselves or others? And as if these crimes were not atrocious enough, will ye forswear yourselves and add the guilt of perjury? Do you not tremble to lift up your hand toward heaven, and invoke the most holy, all-seeing, almighty God to attest what you know to be false, or know not certainly to be true? Such kind of oaths would be more pardonable if taken in Satan's name, *who is a lyer, and the father of it*, but what an indignity is false swearing to the God of truth? As if he were an idol who did not know, or a partaker of your crime, and did countenance your lie; and will not  
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God be avenged upon such a bold perfidious race? Surely he will; the *flying roll* is particularly commissioned against them too, not only to their personal ruin, but to the utter consumption of their house, substance, and family.

5. *Will ye burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not?* In this manner Israel often went astray, forsook the true God for dunghill deities, and with the blinded nations around them, payed homage to those that were no gods; and how readily do we condemn their brutish stupidity? But will it absolve us from the charge of idolatry, that we have renounced Popery and Pa-

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ganism, and profess the Christian reformed faith? Not altogether, my brethren, notwithstanding that, we may be deeply guilty of this sin; the covetous man is pronounced by the holy Ghost to be an idolater, and the sensualist's god is his belly; and in how many who wear the Christian name, do the love and lusts of this world reign, so as that the love of the Father, and the Saviour is not in them? And is not this to violate the first commandment of the moral law, and to have other gods before him? Is not this most criminal to degrade the excellent One, to exchange their glory and their God for lying vanities, when their heart and hope and confidence, leans more upon the uncertain



certain things of this world, or when they are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God?

6. Whilst under the power, and living in the practice of these sins, *Will ye come and stand before God in his house?* When rebels indeed against him, will ye put on the mein and look of domesticks, and friends of his family, the appearance of his faithful servants, as if ye were coming to receive his commands, as if ye were waiting like humble supplicants for his favour, and the alms of his house? What Atheism and lying is this, prophane deceit and dissimulation? And will not an holy God see, and highly resent it? Yes, *What has*

*my beloved to do in my house, says God, seeing she has wrought lewdness with many? Jer. xi. 15. And unto the wicked God saith, Psalm l. 16, 17. what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou takest my covenant in thy mouth? And why may they not? Why, because that this profession and pretence of piety notwithstanding, they went on in the breach of the sixth commandment, by hatred of their brother, and speaking ill of him; in the breach of the seventh, by being partaker with the vile adulterer, and of the eight, by joining with the thief in sin; though common, what deplorable infatuation and hypocrisy is this? As of coming to God's holy place, would change  
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the colour of crimson crimes, and be a shelter from his wrath to those, who going on frowardly in their way, are a scandal to his blessed name.

7. *Will ye say, we are delivered to do all these abominations? (i. e.)* Will ye flatter yourselves with the hope of acceptance in duties of publick worship, even though sin is held fast by you? Will outward attendance upon God on his holy-day atone, or make an honourable amends for your continued unholy practices through the week? Iniquity, when regarded in the heart, will shut heaven against our prayers, that the Lord will not hear, must it not when reigning in the heart or life, make our sacrifices  
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an abomination to him? Or do you think that God's delivering and sparing you from day to day, is any connivance at, or approbation of your sin? Is deferring punishment to you in particular, when there are many other instances of it, a sure presumption of impunity? Or because sentence against your evil works is not speedily executed; does it therefore follow, that it will not be executed at all? Such indeed is the fatal reasoning, and inward thought of many, *viz.* That divine patience toward them is prophetick of their escape, when in truth the abuse of it, will *treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* I proceed now to make  
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some reflections upon the whole,

1. We may see here the deceitful stupifying nature of sin, the folly and infatuation of sinners; how amazingly does it corrupt and bribe their judgment, blind and benumb the soul, and render it insensible of its guilt and danger, though both are very great? What falshood and gross absurdities will they not swallow down, to give them quiet in their destructive paths? Though the terms upon which they can only be happy, are writ as with a sun-beam in holy scripture, yet will they promise themselves peace and safety in another way, nay, in a way directly opposite to these; *Trusting in lying words*, as  
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the prophet expresseth it in the 4th verse. Lying words that will not profit, leaning on a profession and privileges, but daily loading themselves with, and increasing that weight of guilt, which will break in pieces the slender reed they rest on, and press them to the lowest hell; deluded men! deaf to reason, conscience, and revelation, to the calls of duty, gain, and glory, whom neither the sweetest mercies, nor terrors of the Lord will persuade; *But let God be true, and those men perish in their lye*; because of these sins mentioned in my text, *The wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.*

2. Does conscience attest that such are some of you, and that with one or other of these vices you are chargeable in the sight of God; admit the conviction, think not to cover or quiet it by a profession, or to make amends by the performance of religious duties; *To what purpose a multitude of these, says God? Can the sinner avail himself of these, while his hands are full of blood, or oppression, or injustice, while the heart is full of lust, and he holds fast iniquity, and will not let it go? Suffer therefore the word of exhortation, Isa. lv. 7. Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God,*

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*for he will abundantly pardon ;* Yes, such as these in my text, have been pardoned, and obtained mercy, such as they, hear it O ye sinners! have been washed and sanctified too, and the fountain of redeeming blood which purified them can make you clean likewise, when applied by faith; for its value is not lost, nor in the least abated to this day.

3. Are there among us, *Who steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely?* &c. Then ministers of the gospel should not be left alone, to preach merely, to declare the wrath of God, or inflict censure upon such ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; no, others ought to arise, and stand up  
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with them against such workers of iniquity; the magistrate undoubtedly should, Why else did he assume the office? Surely not to frown upon the sober, the useful and good; surely it was not to gratify his pride with promotion, nor his covetousness with some little profit, *But to be a terror to evil doers*; and if such as these spoke of here, go with impunity, if the impious can walk our streets with their mouth against the heavens, if they can prophane his name, word, or holy-day, if the drunkard and unclean can riot nightly in the tavern and brothwel, unchastised, it is a shrewd presumption that men vile, or vain, or weak, are in place, *For it is when such bear rule*, as the scripture speaks, *that the wicked*



*wicked walk on every side*; here is work likewise for you my brethren, who are professedly united in society for *Reformation of Manners*, I do not mean, that upon every surprize of the mistaking or malicious tongue, you are to be alarmed so, as to wound the peace of families, and stain the innocent, God forbid; but when from loud reports and shrewd presumptions upon further enquiry, the proof is clear, that then you lend your aid, to bring vice to deserved punishment and shame, thus do, and quit yourselves like men, as good members of society, and of the church of JESUS CHRIST.

F I N I S.

